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death in the name of the republic which they had themselves helped to create. And yet, in this bitterest of all disappointments, they sang their song of triumph. The critical historian is apt to be impatient with those eloquent Girondist deputies, who talked when they should have been acting; and there is no need to delude ourselves into thinking that the man who can die nobly or dramatically is therefore wise or just. But there was something more than courage in the way these Girondists faced death and disappointment. It was an act of faith, for which we owe them our gratitude and our reverence. They "did not despair of the republic:" they did not despair of humanity. And the world needs faith in humanity as well as insight into its weakness.

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UTILITARIANISM.

IT is the object of this paper to present in a brief way an argument for the main position of utilitarianism, bearing in mind the later criticisms on that system, and commenting on such of them as seem to need especial notice.

As utilitarianism, then, is so much concerned with happiness and unhappiness, and with larger and smaller quantities of these, it is well to begin by saying concisely in what sense these expressions are used. By happiness, therefore, is intended pleasure and absence of pain; meaning to imply by this that not only those acts cause happiness which give some one pleasure, or which actually free him from pain, but those also which lessen his unhappiness. By unhappiness is intended pain, including every irksome and uncomfortable state of mind whatsoever, and implying that not only those acts cause unhappiness which actually give one pain, but those also which curtail his happiness.

To all intents and purposes this statement has been made before, and has been pronounced obscure in certain criticisms; but an examination of such criticisms will show that the ob-

scurity complained of does not lie in the definition just given, but, if anywhere, in the fact that the words happiness and unhappiness are defined by utilitarians in the above sense, and commonly employed in another and a different sense; hence I am satisfied that if I avoid such a real or apparent change of meaning the reader will have little reason to complain of want of clearness.

Respecting amounts of happiness and unhappiness, some critics seem to expect utilitarians to introduce the yard-stick into ethics, or to descant upon the specific gravity of pains; and they are loud in their disappointment. Utilitarians, however, are scarcely to blame, inasmuch as they never promised anything so picturesque. When they say of a pain that it is bigger than a certain pleasure, or equal to it, the quantitative words, like most words in all the moral sciences, are used metaphorically. When a utilitarian affirms that an act gives more pain than pleasure, he means above all things that it pains many people and pleases few. If the act be one, however, that does not affect many people, then to say that it gives more pain than pleasure means that it puts some one to much inconvenience, to considerable discomfort or severe pain, and affords some one else but a slight pleasure: *a slight pleasure* and *a severe pain* being, I hope, sufficiently intelligible.

That the above account, however, of what is meant by amounts of happiness and unhappiness does not always make it easy, in a given case, to determine whether the pain that an act produces is greater than the pleasure, has always been admitted by utilitarians, and is, indeed, pretty obvious. But it is no less obvious that these cases are the unimportant ones. Wherever the difference is very great between the numbers who are happily and who are unhappily affected, or where the pain is severe and the pleasure trifling, or the inconvenience trifling and the happiness great, then no difficulty appears. Nobody can doubt that it is causing more pain than pleasure to maim a man for life, or to flay him alive in order to gratify some one's passing whim; nobody can doubt that it is causing less happiness than unhappiness to make multitudes go destitute that some one or two may live in ceaseless luxury. The

important cases are the plain cases; and even in the cases that are not plain, the principles that a utilitarian bids you proceed upon are determinate.

The terms being thus understood, one may state the question. It has been said with sufficient iteration that a utilitarian thinks no act wrong which is not such as to cause people more unhappiness than happiness, and that he thinks no act right which is not such as to cause people more happiness than unhappiness, taking into account the happiness and unhappiness not only of the agent, but also of everybody in any wise affected by his conduct, and, in especial, giving due weight to the remote and indirect as well as to immediate effects. All this has been so often insisted on that the utilitarian need seldom complain nowadays that he is in these respects misunderstood. What has not been sufficiently made plain is the more obvious truth that not every class of acts which produce more happiness than unhappiness is right, and not every class of acts which produce more unhappiness than happiness is wrong. The beating of the heart, for example, and involuntary actions universally: these cause more misery, direct and indirect, when they are disorderly than many of the wickedest of crimes, and yet they are not wicked, nor concerned with morality at all. Nor is every act that is voluntary concerned with morality. No matter how much more productive of happiness than of unhappiness, no act is right which, social interference apart, every one feels inclined to practise according to his ability. No matter how much more productive of unhappiness than of happiness, no act is wrong which, social interference apart, every one is inclined uniformly to abstain from so far as he is able. Those acts only are right which, besides being voluntary and causing more happiness than unhappiness, are, like honesty, such that some members of the community will not uniformly practise them, except it may be to gain good fame and other kinds of reward, and to escape censure and other kinds of punishment. And those only are wrong which, besides being voluntary and causing more unhappiness than happiness, are also, like stealing, such that some members of

the community will not abstain from them, except it may be to escape censure and other kinds of punishment, and to gain good fame and other forms of reward.

This definition of right and wrong (which is the fundamental doctrine of utilitarianism, and in relation to which the other doctrines are in the position of premises or corollaries) is sound, if it be true that men desire in and for itself happiness, and nothing but happiness, other objects being chosen, if at all, only as the means of this: that is to say, that each man never desires for its own sake anything but to be happy himself, or that others should be happy to the neglect of himself. The corresponding statement respecting aversion is, that unhappiness—one's own or some other person's—is the only thing that in and of itself inspires one with aversion; this sentiment being felt towards other things, if at all, only because they are the occasions of unhappiness.*

That mankind do have an aversion to pain utilitarians have always thought was pretty plain; and although it is the logical outcome of the remarks of certain critics that they love to dally with the toothache, and would look forward to life-long neuralgia with positive yearning, yet I do not know that they ever actually affirm this, and I should entertain a Johnsonian doubt if they did. And similarly with the desire for happiness. But it is one thing to maintain that men do desire pleasure and feel aversion to pain, and quite another to maintain that they desire and feel an aversion towards nothing else. And the critics of utilitarianism stand ready to show that men desire many things in and for themselves which are in no sense pleasurable, and that they feel aversion to many things in and of themselves which are in no sense painful; some of them even stand ready to show that men never desire happiness at all, or feel aversion to unhappiness. So then it is necessary to answer all these objections before one can maintain utilitarianism; to answer, that is, not every partic-

* One might say simply that men never desire anything but happiness, regarding means and end as distinguishable but not separable parts of one chain of events, which must be chosen or not, as a whole; it being impossible to gain the end without the means.

ular objection, for that would be to treat of some of them many times over, but to answer every class of them.

In the first place, then, some criticisms altogether mistake the point at issue. Utilitarians affirm that happiness is the only object desired in and for itself; they are often thought to affirm that expected happiness or unhappiness is the final cause, the *primum mobile*, of every act; and that when a man leaps from under a falling wall, he does so upon a thought of the misery of broken bones and lacerated flesh; and that when one hurls himself off a dizzy precipice, it is to gain some pleasure which I do not specify, because I cannot imagine what it would be. Now, this opinion, the adversaries of utilitarianism aver, is absurd. To leap from under the wall, they affirm, is, or at least may be, due to a blind impulse, born indeed of one's past experience of the danger of falling masses, but without, in the present instance, any prevision of that danger, or at least uncontrolled by such prevision; while to throw one's self off a precipice may be so far from being in pursuit of pleasure or in flight from pain, that it is one's very horror at being crushed by such a fall that makes the impulse to throw one's self irresistible. Now, all of this is very good doctrine. I am not disposed to deny the existence of uncontrollable impulses founded on habit, nor of "the power of a fixed idea;" but these, and the phenomena of involuntary activity generally, are irrelevant to ethics. The question is, do men feel aversion to anything but pain, in the broad sense in which utilitarians use that word, and do they desire anything but happiness? The question is not whether there is a source of activity other than desire and aversion. And those, therefore, who have thought that utilitarianism implies that desire for happiness and aversion to unhappiness are the sole springs of action, have disbelieved it, in so far as they have misunderstood it.

In the next place, some critics distinguish between the state of things in the outer world and our consciousness of it; and they aver that while it is the consciousness which is pleasurable, it is the state of things which is desired. It cannot be, they affirm, a pleasure that is desired, for, if so, illusion would

be as dear to us as reality, and all men would wish to run merrily mad that they might be kings, or deities, or whatsoever else is to their mind the tip-top of blessedness. But rather than this, the argument goes on, one would prefer a sober, and even a dismal, sanity. One does not, then, desire happiness; he wishes rather for a certain state of things in the external world; he wishes to have vast possessions, not to imagine that he has them; to be respected, not to think that he is. Indeed, if one must be in error, he would choose to be his beau-idéal, and feel that he was far from it, rather than to be a poor conceited ninny in a fool's paradise.

The reply to this criticism is, that it does not distinguish between the way that madness appears from within, to the mad, and from without, to the sane. If one could see merry madness as the merry mad see it, possibly one would prefer it. Certain it is that when one is in a fool's paradise he thinks nobody so enviable as himself; and opium-eaters do prefer dreams to reality. But seen from without, as sane men must see it, to be a poor deluded creature is a condition of bitter humiliation and of real weakness, exposed to almost every kind of misery. While, on the contrary, to be one's beau-idéal, and at the same time modestly to undervalue one's self, although, indeed, uncomfortable, is nevertheless much better than real danger amid fancied security. I admit, then, that one does not wish to go mad, but aver that this does not controvert but rather confirms the doctrine that men desire happiness and feel aversion to pain. If to be insane were regarded, not as humiliating, but as a glorious career, not as a wretched but as a happy one, then indeed one's repugnance to it would need accounting for. But quite the contrary as it is. That no certain state of things in the outer world is desired in and for itself, or otherwise than for its effects on happiness and unhappiness, is made plain by the following. One desires money. Well, money exists, why does not that content him? Well, that is not what he wants; to say that one desires money is elliptical; he wishes to possess money; and that is to say, he wants his command of pleasures and his power to ward off unhappiness increased. To possess money that would not buy

houses, nor food, nor service, nor deference, would not satisfy him; such money would be mere counterfeit, would be money in heaven, or magician's money that withers away when put in the till. What one desires money for, in short, is as a means, not as an end. And so with any other external situation. But this introduces the third objection; or rather it introduces the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth objections,—four, which are nearly related, dealing as each of them does with some object of desire (or aversion) that to some or all people is naturally unpleasant (or pleasant), but which has become artificially or factitiously pleasant (or unpleasant).

For example, it is urged that one desires for its own sake not always happiness, but also at times the means of it. Money, for instance, more often than not, perhaps, is desired without any immediate notion of what it is to be spent for; and when it is obtained the desire is satisfied. But if it were not the money which is desired, the desire would not be satisfied by the money; if it were a pleasure that was desired, the desire would not be satisfied until the money was spending, for it is in its use alone that money or other mere means can give happiness.

This objection might be dismissed with the single remark that it ignores such pleasures as the feeling of security, and generally what one may call the pleasures and pains of expectation or of power and weakness. It argues that money, and other means, can give no pleasure except when used. Was there ever a more patent absurdity? Two men shall eat their dinner at the same club, lodge in apartments equally luxurious, dress with equal taste and richness, spend, in short, precisely equal sums of money; and yet one of them will be seraphically happy, and the other haggard with misery; for the first has his income secure, and the second does not know one day that he can meet the liabilities of the next. It is true in many instances that we desire means; it is equally true in those instances that the mere possession of means is pleasant. What is more delightful than the possession of power of any kind? And yet it essentially consists in the consciousness that you can do thus and so, if you should want to. The reply is

founded on facts so familiar that I do not see how one can hesitate about accepting it.

A similar line of remark disposes of the second class of factitiously pleasant or unpleasant objects, which are most typically illustrated by keepsakes and mementos. What, it is asked, is intrinsically pleasant about a faded ribbon or a lock of hair, a tin rattle or a baby's shoe? And yet people treasure these, and would not barter them against a host of pleasures. The reply is not obscure. As the former objection ignored the pleasures and pains of expectation, so this one ignores the pleasures and pains of memory, or what may loosely be called such. A lock of hair, a baby's shoe, are indeed capable of giving very little pleasure to those who have no associations with them; but if it was your wife's hair, if the baby was your baby, if, in short, these mementos are soaked through and through with your fond memories, then they are worth more to you than to anybody else; the sight of them stirs you with half-forgotten scenes of long ago, and to part with them lightly would be a desecration, and cost a pang that might be marvellous to Gradgrind or Ralph Nickleby. And as with keepsakes, so with the house that one was born in, the fields he played in when a boy, his old-time steadfast friends. To put it generally, any object that is associated with an interesting period of one's past has an artificial, a reflected, interest for him; pleasurable, if the period be one that he dwells on fondly, painful, if it be one that he hates to be reminded of.

This last class of facts differs from the one just previous, in being associated with the past, while that was associated with the future. Both of them are closely allied to a third class of objects, which are also ultimately desired in and for themselves, although naturally they are either neutral or even positively repugnant. These, too, are objected to utilitarianism. It is argued, for example, that there is nothing pleasant in business routine; a duller object could hardly be devised. And yet it is actually desired for its own sake by certain men. They "miss their work," and are eager to get back to it; they would not retire from business on any account, and will con-

tinue it even at a loss. Is it not clear, then, that they desire something that is not pleasant? On the contrary, it is not at all clear. It is clear, perhaps, that they desire what was, at one time not pleasant; but, however irksome in the beginning, a routine, as it becomes familiar, becomes to many minds positively agreeable; and to almost all minds it becomes, after a long time, relatively agreeable; they have been in its toils so long that they have lost the art of filling up the day without it, and are preyed upon by an *ennui* that it alone relieves them from. The extremest cases of this force of habit illustrate this best. Hardly any wretchedness can be greater than to be known as a criminal and an outcast from society, and to be restricted in your liberty, with all the items of degradation and brutality that the inmates of a prison must endure. This is a lot so woful that it is expressly chosen to strike terror to the hearts of would-be malefactors; and when the period of confinement ends only with the life of the condemned, it is admitted to be more fearful than death itself. And yet custom can make even this lot pleasant,—more pleasant than the old, free life it was such misery to be torn away from,—insomuch that released prisoners have come back and pleaded to be shut up again. They had become blunted to what was distressing in their confinement; outside ways were strange to them, and habitual ways were pleasant.

It is in this connection that it is pertinent to discuss the objection that some men have no aversion to being virtuous, which, it is affirmed, is surely at times not pleasant. The amount of sentiment that clouds the mind here is deplorable. To those who do desire virtue, is there ever a time when to feel that they have done right is not pleasant? Is there ever a time, for them, when to feel that they have been guilty is not a bitter humiliation? Certainly not. Then there never is a time, for them at least, when virtue is not pleasant. And this, too, when we have left out of account the substantial ills that men inflict on the wicked, and the indirect rewards of virtue. In truth, the objection is so flatly in the face of facts that it is absurd; so absurd that I do not believe that the objection as it is put is the real objection of those who urge it. Their

real difficulty I believe to be that they do not understand how what is irksome to all people in childhood, and to some people all their lives, can eventually become agreeable to others. Cases of this kind, however, have just been dealt with in the three preceding objections. It was there shown how an object naturally neutral might become factitiously pleasurable or painful in any one of three ways. Virtue has become pleasant to some men, and vice unpleasant, in all three ways united. Is social excommunication less terrible than the ills that money can provide against? If not, there is as good a reason to desire virtue in and for itself as there is to desire money: the righteous are safe. Do men shrink from going into the dark because, when children, they were told of sheeted dead that wander there? A better reason exists why they should shrink from doing wrong. Look at the picture of abject terror on a child's face when he has been caught in naughtiness and is to be punished; think of what a single fright of that kind may effect, and of the number of times that such frightening is repeated, and of how mature reflection and experience tend not to efface but to deepen the impression. And above all and more than all, to those that love virtue and have an aversion to vice, to do right is habitual, to do wrong is new and strange. If habit will make a criminal's position in society, or rather in a jail, pleasant, what may it not do for virtue?

A seventh class of objections to the doctrine we are considering is founded on facts of the following kind. An object of desire or aversion may consist of parts, so to speak, which are individually insipid, but which taken as a whole afford happiness or unhappiness. This is best illustrated by games. One plays whist; his object is to make points; but there is nothing pleasant in that object; to see one figure in his counters is no more pleasant than to see any other. Or say one goes a-walking and determines to walk to a certain tree; he finds no enjoyment in being near that tree, neither did he expect to. These cases, it is argued, are typical of many of the activities of mankind; their objects are, many times, perfectly neutral, and yet are eagerly desired. It is not, in

such cases, the objects that are pleasurable at all; it is, if anything, the relief from *ennui* or the exercise of skill; and these cannot themselves be the object of desire. For skill essentially consists in adapting means to an end; so that the exercise of skill of necessity implies the choice of an object other than the display of skill itself. Similarly with the pleasure of exercise. To exercise is to do something; but you cannot do anything without first choosing what it shall be, and then that will be your object, and not the pleasure that you will feel on the way to that.

This is the objection, and it is a quibble. No conclusion can be considered sound which is gathered from the notion that when a man goes a-shooting his object is to get a target with a hole in the middle. There are, indeed, good people who imagine that hunting and fishing are undertaken for the game; but all sane minds abandon that idea when they learn the price of an outfit. The object of hunting is sport,—the pleasures of skill and exercise. As I have said, the fallacy consists in fixing on one of a number of things which are pleasant only in combination, and calling that one the object; that one alone is not pleasant; therefore neither is your object pleasant. But the two words, object and object, have different meanings. Birds, for example, are indeed the object of a sportsman's gun, but not, perhaps, the object of his desire. The latter object is nothing less than the whole act,—hunting and shooting birds,—an act which is pleasant. Is it really necessary to say that one does not play whist that he may see the larger figures on his score-card? Man is seldom so lunatic that he could not attain that object in a much more brief way. Common language should warn a philosopher from such a slip as that. One does not say that he desires to behold a score of seven points, nor to shuffle cards, nor to deal them, and sort them, and lay them on the table one after another; he says that he wishes to play whist.

There are, again, some who affirm that the mere fact of having a desire fulfilled is itself a pleasure. The event desired may in and of itself be perfectly neutral; let it occur, and, so far as concerns it, one is no happier than before; but merely

because one has set his heart on its occurring, and it has occurred, on that account he is happier. He has had a desire, and it has been gratified; and to have a desire gratified is pleasant in and of itself, apart from the power of the thing desired to afford pleasure. Now, this pleasure that belongs to the mere fulfilment of a desire is clearly not capable of being the object of that desire; for the desire of which it is the object would be by definition the desire of the pleasure of having a distinct and separate desire fulfilled. What, then, is the object of this second desire? Whatever it may be, it is clearly not the pleasure of its own fulfilment. Well, then, those who point out this peculiarity of a fulfilled wish affirm that utilitarians overlook it, and that it is only by so doing that they make out an apparent case for themselves. For if we deny that to desire money is to desire pleasure, the utilitarian replies, "What! is it not pleasant to receive money?" It may be so, we rejoin, but that fact does not prove that the pleasure we feel in receiving money was desired. For that pleasure may have been, and indeed we aver that it was, merely the pleasure of having our desire for the money fulfilled; and this pleasure was the object of our desire for money. The utilitarian, in effect, proves that the gratification of any desire, no matter what, is pleasant; this, however, is nothing to the point: what the utilitarian should prove is quite a different matter,—namely, that we desire nothing but the pleasantness of pleasant things.

Against this position a utilitarian might admit that it is pleasant to have a desire satisfied, but maintain that all the things which men desire are pleasurable. This, however, has already been done, so far at least as concerns the instances appealed to by those who urge this objection. It remains to join issue on the assertion that the mere fulfilment of a desire is pleasant. This implies that when one desires a pleasant object and obtains it he has two distinct and separate pleasures,—one due to the object, one to the satisfaction of desire. Now, if this means only that a state of craving is disagreeable, and that to be relieved of it is pleasant in the technical sense, then I have nothing to object, except that in this sense it is

not even plausible to say that utilitarians mistake the pleasure of the satisfaction of desire for the pleasure due to the object desired. But if it means more than this, then I am content to appeal to the facts. If you are treated to music unexpectedly, do you miss any pleasure that you have when you have obtained the music by your own efforts? If not, then the objection under consideration is based on a fiction. When you have desired something which does not please you when obtained, does there exist side by side with the pain of disappointment a pleasure of some kind,—the pleasure of satisfied desire? To me it seems not. When I have obtained my object and am disappointed in it, I find no palliating pleasure in the fact that, having desired what would disappoint me, I have obtained it and been disappointed. But whether or not this be true, the reply already given to the objection must also be taken into account.

This, I think, represents fairly each class of the objections which have been urged against the doctrine: that the only thing which men desire in and for itself is happiness, and the only thing which they turn from is unhappiness. I have stated the objections as forcibly as I know how, and have placed after each of them what seemed necessary to show wherein I did not think that objection sound. In almost every instance the issue has been joined on a question of fact, which each must settle for himself by observation. Those who, like myself, do not find these objections defensible, will be justified, until better objections are brought forward, in holding that the only object desired for its own sake is happiness, and the only object that in and of itself inspires aversion is unhappiness.

In the mean time I pass to the rest of the argument, which is as follows. If each man desires only his own happiness, and feels aversion only to what is disagreeable to himself; or if each man desires only his own happiness and that of some one or more besides, and feels aversion to what is disagreeable to them; then the definitions above given of wrong and right are correct. For when men live together there are many things that one can do to make another happy, many that one can

do to make another unhappy. If, therefore, it were a man's object to obtain happiness for himself or some one that he loved, he would, except when it would be more trouble than it was worth, employ the means at his disposal to make his fellow-men do those things which contribute to, and refrain from doing those things which detract from, his happiness or the happiness of those who are dear to him. He would not, however, find it necessary to make men perform every kind of act that he wanted them to perform, nor to make them abstain from every kind of act that he did not want performed. For some acts that would contribute to his happiness and to the happiness of those with whom he identifies himself would contribute also to the happiness of the man who does them, and would not improbably, therefore, be practised by that man in the pursuit of his own aims. Such acts there would be no need to make men do, for they would be doing them already. One would need to make men perform those acts only which they would neglect if one let them alone. In like manner it would not be necessary to make men abstain from every act that one wanted them to abstain from, for some of the acts that would make one or one's friend unhappy would also make the agent himself unhappy, and he would not improbably, therefore, abstain from them of his own accord. One would have to make men abstain from those acts only which they would practise if one let them alone. Now, passing by as irrelevant the question, what specific acts would need respectively to be discouraged and encouraged,—acts which, it is plain, would vary in different communities with the variations of national taste and character,—passing this by, as irrelevant to a discussion of general principles, there comes next, to inquire what the means are at one's command by which he can make men do thus and so. Everybody is practically acquainted with them. They are kind words and good offices, if one does as you wish ; censure and ill offices, if one does not do as you wish. Each of us, in short, can make another happy and unhappy by some kind of reward or punishment. These are the means that each would use to make others do his will. But it is plain that these instruments of coercion work

both ways. If it be pleasant for me to have you abstain from doing certain things, if for that reason I would strive to influence you by reward and punishment; so, on the other hand, if it be unpleasant to you to be obliged to abstain from doing those things, you would use reward and punishment to make me let you alone. It is not difficult to tell which of two persons thus situated, other things equal, would win. If the suffering that your act would cause me would be very grievous, while the inconvenience that it would cause you to abstain from that act would be very slight, I should be very active and persistent in my efforts to coerce you, and my condition would be such as deeply to move my friends and sympathizers to assist me, while you would not only be comparatively acquiescent yourself, but your friends would be so too. Other things equal, he would give way who would suffer least by doing so. Men living in society would tend from the first to enforce, under penalty of punishment, the habit on the part of each of abstaining from the pursuit of a pleasure which must be purchased at a cost to one's neighbor of a more than equivalent pain, and of submitting to something disagreeable, if by so doing one afforded his neighbor more than equivalent pleasure. Especially so when the happiness to be sacrificed and the unhappiness to be endured affected but a few, while the happiness to be gained and the unhappiness to be avoided affected a great many; for the many could make their favor well worth having, and their displeasure terrible to the few. In fine, voluntary acts would tend from the first to be distinguished into classes; and, among others, into the class of those that you must not do, under penalty of censure and graver forms of punishment, and into the class of those that you must do, if you would escape punishment and enjoy fair fame. Acts would, in effect, be classed as wrong and right. Acts which you must not do—wrong acts—would be those which, upon a consideration of all their effects, caused more unhappiness than happiness, and which, besides, would be practised by certain people if they were not restrained by reward and punishment. Acts, on the contrary, which you must do—right acts—would be those that caused

more happiness than unhappiness, and which, besides, would be neglected by some people if they were not constrained by reward and punishment to do them. These, I say, are the qualities by which right acts and wrong acts would be respectively characterized, if men were beings each of whom desired in and for itself nothing but happiness, and felt aversion only towards unhappiness. But men are such beings, and these, therefore, are the qualities by which right acts and wrong acts are respectively characterized.

This is the argument. It might be confirmed by pointing out that such acts as we hold to be indisputably right and wrong—justice and murder, for example—do display in a marked degree the qualities above named as the basis of the classification. It might further be confirmed by taking certain customs regarded as right by the savages who practise them, but by us regarded as hideously wrong, and showing that from the point of view of the savages those customs possess the attributes of rectitude; showing, for instance, that a human sacrifice, intended to ward off the wrath of a maleficent deity from the tribe at large, is precisely on a par with a “forlorn hope” in civilized warfare. But, rather than to dwell on all this, I prefer to indicate the bearing of the position here taken on certain questions in dispute.

It may be urged, for instance, against what has been here said, that it is the business of ethics to give the grounds, not to trace the genesis, of morality. But anybody who supposes that the object of the preceding paragraph but one was to trace the genesis of morality has very much mistaken its import. It is intended to show what are the qualities that distinguish acts which must and acts which must not be done among mankind. It was with this purpose, and with this purpose only, and only in so far as suited this purpose, that anything which might bear on the question of genesis was alluded to. If I have not introduced anything that did not contribute to the discrimination of the qualities I was searching for, then nothing in the argument is irrelevant. And I may add that if nothing in the argument is irrelevant, they must be in error who hold that no psychological question is

relevant to ethics; but this carries us over to the objection that utilitarians do not deal with the grounds of morality, which I must state more at large.

It occurs oftenest in this shape: that the preceding argument for utilitarianism is nothing to the purpose; that it has merely shown utilitarianism to be the morality that is, and not the morality that ought to be. There are, or at least may be, other and more desirable* ideals than the utilitarian, and it is the business of ethics to show which of these is the most desirable. This the preceding argument has not done, and it has, therefore, done nothing.

Often as I have heard this language, I have never understood which of two things it means. The morality that ought to be is a very dark expression. Ought, in a strict sense, refers to one's obligation to do right, his liability to punishment if he does wrong. In this sense of the word I can readily understand that there is a kind of man that a man ought to be, but not that there is a kind of morality that a morality ought to be. In a looser employment of the word "ought," however, one says that a thing ought to be thus and so, meaning that it would be thereby fitter to minister to man's wants, and that is to say to his happiness. Using the word in this sense, to affirm that utilitarianism is not the system that ought to be, is to say that if mankind would adopt another system they would be happier. And this is also one of the meanings of the doctrine that there are other ideals which are more desirable than the utilitarian. But either this is a contradiction

* Mr. Mill's courtly critic, Mr. Grote, affirms that utilitarians confuse two meanings of the word desirable,—that it means both capable of being desired and worth desiring. Mr. Grote did not point out more in detail the distinction between these phrases; and if he had done so, it does not seem to me he would have found it of use against utilitarians. To say that a thing is worth desiring means that it has the quality which men desire. To say that some things are capable of being desired which are not worth desiring, means that one may be mistaken in thinking that an object has the quality which he desires, and that he may, therefore, out of ignorance of its true nature, desire it. But if this be true, one cannot say that pleurability may be only capable of being desired and not worth desiring; for pleurability is not an object which may or may not have the desired quality; it is the desired quality itself.

in terms or else the rival system is not feasible. For the ideal of utilitarianism, it is plain, is none other than to make mankind so conduct themselves that they will be happier than they would be on any alternative line of conduct whatsoever that is possible in the sense of feasible.* To say, therefore, that

* I hope that this is an intelligible statement of the object of utilitarianism. The time-honored statement that its object is the greatest possible happiness has been very much misunderstood; so much so that it has been thought that utilitarianism was refuted by the remark that one man might place his happiness in having another man miserable; and, in general, by the remark that it is not possible by any method whatever to make every moment of every life free from pain, and filled with the utmost bliss that the human frame is susceptible of. I hope I have made myself so plain that there is no occasion for criticism of that kind. Another kind of criticism, which I may call objection for objection's sake, no utilitarian can hope to avoid giving occasion for. I subjoin an example: "If happiness = pleasure, then 'get happiness' = 'get pleasure.' What is pleasure? It is a general name, and 'get happiness' will mean 'get a general name.' But a general name is not a reality, and cannot be got. The reality is the particular. 'Get happiness' will mean, then, 'get some one pleasure.' Is that it? No; we are to get all the happiness we can. And so, after all our quibbling, 'get happiness' does mean 'get the largest possible sum or collection of pleasures.'" (Bradley, "Ethical Studies," p. 88, note.)

But "the sum or the all of pleasures is a self-contradiction, and, therefore, the search for it is futile. A series which has no beginning, or, if a beginning, yet no end, cannot be summed; there is no all, and yet the all is postulated and the series is to be summed. But it cannot be summed until we are dead, and then if we have realized it, we, I suppose, do not know it, and we are not happy; and before death we cannot have realized it, because there is always more to come,—the series is always incomplete. We must say, then, that one never reaches happiness. Or, do you mean as much happiness as you can get? Then every one at every point is happy, and happiness is always complete, for, by the hedonistic theory, we all of us get as much as we can." (Idem, pp. 88, 89, text.)

"A pleasure is only in the time during which I feel it. A past pleasure means either an idea or another (secondary) impression. Itself is nothing at all: I did get it, I have not got it; and the 'did get' it is not the pleasure. In order to have the sum of pleasures you must have them all now, which is impossible." (Idem, note, p. 89.)

Of this brilliant compound of wit and reasoning its author should be justly proud. He deserves great credit for his ingenuity in misinterpreting his opponents. He is versatile: having understood something so obscure as Hegel, he can misunderstand something so clear as Mill. But he wishes to be taken seriously; he says so. A favorite exordium of his is, "I am ashamed to examine such reasoning." This seems an apt place for the quotation.

But to favor Mr. Bradley: When a utilitarian says that he wants all the happiness he can get,—if, indeed, a utilitarian ever put his doctrine so inelegantly,

this is not the system that ought to be, is to say that men would be happier if they adopted a system which would make them less happy, or, if they adopted a system which they cannot adopt.

Either it means this—which is the first of the interpretations that I have put upon it—or else it means what may be explained in this way. It is implied by the whole of the argument for utilitarianism, that if the members of a society had no desire except to be in pain, and had no aversion except to pleasure, then the system of morals in that society would be the precise opposite of the one which obtains among men. And, in general, it may be said that there are as many different systems of morality conceivable as there are societies of beings with different objects of desire. Now, it has been asked, which of these systems is most desirable? To answer this question, it is thought, is the business of ethics; this system, whichever it may be, is the system that “ought to be;” and it is in its failure to show that utilitarianism is this system

—he is believed by Mr. Bradley to mean that he wishes to make a cabinet collection of pleasures. If Mr. Bradley had a small nephew, anxious to learn horse-back-riding, who said that he wanted to get as many rides as possible, Mr. Bradley would not, I am sure, suspect the boy of wanting a sum collection of something. Why, then, does he so understand utilitarians? I can think of but one reason: that, if he had accepted the true and very evident interpretation there would have been no opportunity for his humor about a collection of pleasures. Are we to conclude, then, that Mr. Bradley had so little humor “that he must be witty where he can and not merely where he should”? We may at least infer that he is more conversant with the ridicule of ethics than with the ethics of ridicule.

But even a license to misconstrue does Mr. Bradley little service, for he uses it to prove that a man can never attain what utilitarians affirm to be his object; and as no utilitarian conclusion is founded on the notion that men can attain their object, Mr. Bradley’s denial of that proposition is a superfluous irrelevancy. One would like to know, however, if Mr. Bradley really thinks it foolish to pursue perfect virtue, and wisdom, and other unattainable ideals, and whether he ever heard of approximating an ideal. One would like to know, moreover, why, if Mr. Bradley thought he was combating utilitarianism by showing that their object cannot be attained, he devotes the end of that paragraph to showing that it not only can but must be attained. Which side of the question is Mr. Bradley arguing on? What a pity that John Mill did not live to review the man who found his arguments pitiable!

that the fault in the foregoing argument consists. Indeed, it is in the impossibility of deciding this question that the impossibility of ethics consists.

This looks very formidable, but in truth it is not at all so, unless it be a defect in a theory that it cannot answer unintelligible questions. For unintelligible it is, thoroughly unintelligible, to ask which of these systems is the most desirable. One knows what is meant when you ask, which of certain things is most desirable to you, or to me, or to any other person, or collection of persons; but to ask, which is most desirable neither to you nor to me, nor to any other being or collection of beings, but simply which is most desirable?—is nonsense. It is like inquiring, “Which is the heavier?” “Which what?” you ask; “which of these chairs?” “Oh, no, not which of any two things; just which is the heavier?” One can tell which of these conceivable systems of morality is most desirable for mankind; it is the utilitarian. One can tell which of them would be most desirable for beings who desired unhappiness and felt aversion to happiness; it would be the inutilitarian. But one cannot tell anything about which system is most desirable, not to mankind, nor to any other specified society of beings, but just which is most desirable; or, rather, there is one thing that one can tell about this question,—namely, that the people who ask it are darkening counsel by words without wisdom.

One-half of the criticisms of utilitarianism arise from a misconception of ethics. It is not the business of ethics to inquire what would be the morality of phantoms of the imagination, neither is it its business to answer absurd queries. Its business is to discover what qualities characterize the acts which must, and the acts which must not, be done among men; and then to decide, if need be, what specific acts, among a given people, belong to the one class and the other. When it has done this its work is complete.

But it seems to be thought that the ethical end must be one that appeals to the individual. It is apparently supposed that a utilitarian must prove that each man desires all men to be happy. There never was a more absurd idea; there never

was a more thorough-going misconception. The object of a system of morals need not be desired by any individual whatsoever. Utilitarianism need suppose no more than that each person cares only to be happy himself. If he loves a few others and desires them to be happy, it is well and good ; if he is a philanthropist and loves others than his immediate friends, it is better and better ; but so far as the theory of morals is concerned, all this is unessential. The object of a system of morals is not the object of any individual, it is the object of society, and of society not as a mere collection of individuals, but as an organism. The object of every individual man may be his own happiness ; the object of society is the happiness of all the individuals.

That it should be supposed for an instant that it is a paradox for an association to have an object which is not identical with that of any of its members, and is at times in conflict with the separate interest of one or more of them, does not speak well for the acumen of the critic. It is one of the commonest facts about us. Every joint-stock company is a working model of this paradox. The object of each of the stockholders is to get money for himself ; he does not necessarily care a whit to enrich the other stockholders. But the object of the company is not to enrich that one stockholder, or any other single one ; it is to enrich all ; and in the pursuit of that object it may disregard the wishes of a minority, or condemn their property. A still more instructive example is afforded by an army. In fact, a large association more frequently than not has an object which is more or less in conflict with that of particular members of it.

To imagine from the fact that the object of morals is not an object to any individual, that the injunctions of morality will exercise no power over the individual, is to theorize blindfold. In and of themselves I admit that the injunctions of morality do exercise no power. I do not mean that they never do, but that they never do over all people : by its very definition an injunction of morality commands what somebody does not wish to do. Its power over such people lies entirely in the fact that they can attain their individual hap-

piness only by obeying the injunction; they can attain the benefits of society only by living in society; and society endeavors, by loading wrong-doing with punishment, to make it more unpleasant for the doer than it, otherwise, would be pleasant,—to make it more repugnant by art than it is attractive by nature. Here is ample authority for the injunctions of morality over the immoral, so long as society can inflict the gravest suffering that a man is capable of. Over the moral, these injunctions have, indeed, the authority above alluded to, but have it only in the background. Men who have had rectitude bred into them do right for their own comfort, just as they wash their faces and hands; they do right, for the most part, from mere habit,—in extreme cases because they would be bitterly ashamed of themselves if they did not; and very rarely indeed does the thought of social disgrace and punishment enter in their calculation. And one who has a love for his kind finds in this a further motive for doing right.*

It will be seen from the three preceding paragraphs that a

* Some thinkers endeavor to do away with all distinctions between moral and immoral injunctions. Every injunction, they say, prescribes a line of conduct that one must pursue if he would gain some object. They are of the form, "Be a firm friend if you would have firm friends," "Make yourself a chronic growler if you would have your material comforts looked to." And the only authority that the injunction exercises over him is the desire that he has for the object. And this being equally true of moral as of immoral and non-moral injunctions, there is no distinction between them, and no difference in their authority.

All of this follows from looking at ethical injunctions from the individual's point of view. Looked at, however, from the true point of view, the view of society and the individual, the distinction between moral and non-moral injunctions is plain, and so is the difference in their authority. For the non-moral injunction is conceived with reference to an object of the individual; a moral injunction is conceived with reference to the object of society. The non-moral precept says, "Do this, for it will gain you such and such an object that you want." The moral precept says, "Do this, for it will give society such and such an object that you perhaps do not want." The authority that the non-moral precept has lies in the attractiveness of its object to the individual. The authority that the moral precept has does not lie in the attractiveness of its object to the individual; it lies quite outside of that object. Here would seem to me to be abundant distinction.

utilitarian does hold—and one who has mastered the utilitarian position will see that whoever accepts it must hold—that morality is infinitely nobler, infinitely more unselfish, than perhaps any of the individuals who are subject to it. It will be seen, too, how complete is the subjection of the individual to the moral law, and wherein the object of his moral responsibility consists. One's responsibility, and the fact of what is right and what is wrong for him, does not seem to depend upon his knowledge of it, or his belief in it, or his consent to it; for, in truth, it does depend on none of these things. The fact of his responsibility lies in the disposition and muscles of his fellow-men; to say that he is responsible is to say that he is liable to punishment at their hands; a liability which is in no wise dependent upon his consent to it. And, similarly, what he shall be responsible for, what is right and what is wrong, does not depend on himself; it depends on his fellows; and it is not a matter of caprice with them, but a matter foreordained, which has its root deep down in the nature of their being. The particular things that they will make him responsible for will vary indefinitely with their knowledge and their character, and at one period that act shall be called right which at another shall be denounced as wrong, but it will be for the reason that they have changed their mind about what qualities the act in question has, and not for the reason that they have reformed their classification of acts into wrong and right upon other and different qualities. So long as men desire nothing for its own sake but happiness, and so long as nothing but unhappiness inspires men with aversion, so long will the utilitarian account of morality be the true account; and the doctrine of morals, concerned though it be with the definition of terms, is not concerned with anything that is arbitrary or fortuitous, but with something as determinate and permanent as the constitution of human nature itself.

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